

First U NJ BIPOC Focus Group

Feedback - 8th Principle DRAFT

Resolution

1. Praise

"Overall, I think this is a great document. It looks like you all put a lot of thought and work into it. And I appreciate your commitment to ongoing work articulated here. "

"I think its great i would not change a thing"

"Okay that's VERY good."

"I have read the 8th amendment resolution for First Unitarian Society NJ. This resolution makes anti-racism an integral part of holistic spiritual development and thoroughly prioritizes the objective.
I see it as thoughtful, thorough, and clear for the annals of those who will be interested in the evolution of this society.
Like many resolutions, it sets a theoretical framework and intention. It is broad and energetic. Step by step.

This resolution and amendment is a powerful decision that I look forward to seeing it in action."

"The framework of dismantling systemic racism to achieve "spiritual wholeness" sticks with me the most, I think because I haven't thought about it through this lens before. "

"So, I delayed giving this back because I kept reading it, trying to find something wrong with it; however, I don't really see anything see anything wrong. I actually think it is very good for an overall general principle."

"The document covers all the important points to deconstruct racism. You are doing the right thing."

2. Gaps/shortfalls/criticism

"one important point that (to me, anyway) is not clearly addressed, and that is the need to partner with other progressive groups and possibly congregations of color, in an effort to foster increased dialogue and understanding between disparate groups...and the need to be sensitive to the urge POC groups will have to be wary of being approached by a group they may be inclined to view as an enemy.

Outreach to the surrounding (and endangered) community is important - but so is willingness to let them take the lead..."

"It does not offend or put me on guard as a member of African heritage. Nor does it invite or energize me to want to participate. It's important to know that the resolution is not a welcome sign for new members. It requires questions to be asked when creating materials and spaces for visitors and potential new members:

- Does this welcome pamphlet include the energy of all UU principles-- especially the 8th principle?
- When I review this service, were all 8 UU principles expressed?"

'There is nothing "almost invisible" about "pervasive racism" rather we choose not to acknowledge the extent to which it exists.

"almost invisible" to whom?
"obstructs us" who is "us" who is the audience here?
"additional" vs "necessary"
"...proposed by the Unitarian Universalist Association" Is the UUA actually proposing that congregations adopt the 8th principle, now?"'

" I think it's important to include BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) somewhere in this doc. I found a spot for it pretty late into the doc so if you could find a way to include it earlier, that would go a long way for inclusivity!"

"Just the inclusion of the acronym BIPOC."

'I would challenge the use of this word. Racism isn't invisible. White people have been conditioned not to see it while BIPOC might not have the language or resources to understand its extent. Something like "we are blind to it" would be better. (What about replacing "invisible" with "we are blind to the impact on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)"? That would both address this language and move the first mention of BIPOC up.)

I think "racially" is a vital word to include here as UU's have always been inclusive, but this document is specifically about race/racism.

This is a great first step but whereas most of the document states action, this is less actionable. What will members do once they understand their relationship to white supremacy, institutional racism, etc., and how will they accomplish their goals? What are members holding each other accountable for? Think about the Angela Davis quote "In a racist society, it's not enough to be non-racist, we must be anti-racist."

"The only thing that stuck with me while reading it is "How?" How are you going to do these things? I guess it's the old saying, actions speak louder than words, but that's a different conversation, isn't it? I realize that this is just a first step. Ok, so I hope this was helpful and not just rambling..lol."

"However, the style of the document is very verbose. I'm not a fan of this style of writing (i.e proclamation sounding language). So my first question is "Who do you believe is the audience of this document"? The current members or potential new members of the First Unitarian congregation?

If you want to attract and impress people, I would rather it be written in fewer words like the 7 principles are. This is Clear and to the point.

1st Principle: The inherent worth and dignity of every person;

2nd Principle: Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;

3rd Principle: Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;

4th Principle: A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;

5th Principle: The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;

6th Principle: The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;

7th Principle: Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

You can add a 8th principle addressing ... a diverse multicultural community that will dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves etc."

3. Specific edits (Charlie will mock up these changes in the resolution for us to review tonight)

1)

“BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we shall seek out and elevate voices that challenge institutionalized points of view to ensure we obtain alternative and inclusive perspectives,”

2) I think it's important to include BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) somewhere in this doc. I found a spot for it pretty late into the doc so if you could find a way to include it earlier, that would go a long way for inclusivity!

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we shall seek out and elevate BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) voices that challenge institutionalized points of view to ensure

3) I would challenge the use of this word. Racism isn't invisible. White people have been conditioned not to see it while BIPOC might not have the language or resources to understand its extent. Something like “we are blind to it” would be better. (What about replacing “invisible” with “we are blind to the impact on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)? That would both address this language and move the first mention of BIPOC up.)

WHEREAS pervasive racism, so deeply embedded in our culture that it is almost invisible , obstructs us from living into these principles; AND

4) I think “racially” is a vital word to include here as UU's have always been inclusive, but this document is specifically about race/racism.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we shall seek out and elevate BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) voices that challenge institutionalized points of view to ensure we obtain racially inclusive perspectives

5) This is a great first step but whereas most of the document states action, this is less actionable. What will members do once they understand their relationship to white supremacy, institutional racism, etc., and how will they accomplish their goals? What are members holding each other accountable for? Think about the Angela Davis quote “In a racist society, it’s not enough to be non-racist, we must be anti-racist.” (**accountable for becoming actively anti-racist?**)

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we, as a congregation, will provide our individual members with resources to foster their own journey towards spiritual wholeness through identifying and addressing their own relationship with white supremacy, white privilege, and personal and institutional racism, and to empower each other to hold one another accountable, AND

6) *Please note that these comments are not actually proposed changes but refer to sections in the resolution that we should consider to update*

“There is nothing “almost invisible” about “pervasive racism” rather we choose not to acknowledge the extent to which it exists.

“almost invisible” to whom?

“obstructs us” who is “us” who is the audience here?

“additional” vs “necessary”

“...proposed by the Unitarian Universalist Association” Is the UUA actually proposing that congregations adopt the 8th principle, now?”

4. Suggestions for future actions

“one important point that (to me, anyway) is not clearly addressed, and that is the **need to partner with other progressive groups and possibly congregations of color**, in an effort to foster increased dialogue and understanding between disparate groups...and the need to be sensitive to the urge POC groups will have to be wary of being approached by a group they may be inclined to view as an enemy.

Outreach to the surrounding (and endangered) community is important - but so is willingness to let them take the lead..."

“ It's important to know that the resolution is not a welcome sign for new members. **It requires questions to be asked when creating materials and spaces for visitors and potential new members:**

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“My experience in the past year during the Social inJustice happening in this country is the following:

- My company and other US corporations have done a stellar job in bringing the racism topic to the forefront. I've listened to employees share their personal stories of racism. This was eye opening and for the first time I am more aware of the hardships that people of color face (actually more blacks than anyone else).
- I also read that some place(libaries?) in Europe sets up 1 on 1 sessions with people where each person describes themselves so the other person just listens and understands their viewpoint. People need to listen to peoples stories.
- There is a reason that Blacks and other people of color congregate among their own kind. It's simply because there is that bond of understanding and safety among your own. They know all too well how they get treated.
- Blacks and other people of color don't necessarily bring up the issues they have faced over their lifetime that much, unless someone asks them directly. Some don't want to talk about it, based on my experience talking to few black folks I know at work.
- Reading books that cover racism is the best way to open people's eyes. Is everyone aware of the Tulsa riots, Native Americans hardships, books like "Just Mercy" and countless others?
- Do people really understand "white privilege"? Some will be offended hearing that term, but it's real. ”

5. Other Comments

"My Personal experience: I would not choose to live *just* anywhere in this country, especially areas in the deep South and the boonies. I will only feel comfortable & safe in a culturally diverse town. When I mentioned that to my son, he said "that's not good mom". Well I don't want to experience racism. I never have, which I feel is due to where I grew up and also my personality (meaning I'm not super out going thus don't thrust myself into certain situations). I know other Indian-American have. I get so angry when I hear about the racism in India during British rule and after. I don't know if the world will ever be rid of racism"